



**Testimony before the General Administration and Elections Committee  
In opposition to Governor's Bill 840 An Act Concerning the Elimination of the Office of Consumer  
Counsel, the Office of the Healthcare Advocate, the Office of the Ombudsman for Property Rights and  
Certain Legislative Commissions.**

March 16, 2009

Good day Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone and members of the General Administration and Elections Committee, my name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide anti-hunger and food security organization. I am here today in order to voice my opposition for the Governor's Bill 840 An Act Concerning the Elimination of the Office of Consumer Counsel, the Office of the Healthcare Advocate, the Office of the Ombudsman for Property Rights and Certain Legislative Commissions.

I urge you not to vote out this legislation which would eliminate both the Connecticut Food Policy Council, and the state commissions which protect many of our citizen's, including the Commission on Children. I will speak specifically today about the Connecticut Food Policy Council and the Commission on Children separately.

The Connecticut Food Policy Council was created in 1997 by the state legislature. It provides the opportunity for representatives of state agencies and private organizations to discuss issues, develop policies and government actions that influence the availability, affordability, quality and safety to our food supply.

The Connecticut Food Policy Council plays a unique role in the state. Since its inception as the first such council in the United States to receive funds from a state legislature, the Connecticut Food Policy Council has been active in raising awareness and coordinating food security issues with state agencies. The Council is a forum for the agencies, such Department of Agriculture, State Department of Education, Department of Public Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Transportation, Department of Consumer Protection, the Department of Administrative Services, and private organizations such as food banks, grocers, fruit and vegetable marketers, and farmer organizations to "develop, coordinate and implement a food system policy linking local economic development, environmental protection and preservation with farming and urban issues" and to "advise and provide information to the Governor on the state's food policy".

Over the years the Council has used this unique platform to create some very worthwhile products. For marketing our state's treasures, the Council, working hand in hand with the Department of Transportation developed the "Connecticut Farm Map" which is in its second edition. This resource allows Connecticut residents to see, on a state map, all the markets, wineries, farms (Christmas tree, maple sugar, apples...) that are currently available for public entrance. In collaboration with the State Department of Education the Council released "What's Cooking in Connecticut Schools" with ideas for communities to help improve nutrition and physical fitness for Connecticut's children. The Nutrition Education Summit, hosted by the Council, has morphed into a web-based tool to develop sound nutrition education for schools and communities. The Council published an outstanding publication "Community Food Security in Connecticut: An Evaluation and Ranking of 169 Towns"

which looks at the food security of each community in Connecticut and gives those communities the knowledge to respond to local, food and nutrition issues.

Presently, the Connecticut Food Policy Council has been the convener of meetings to discuss the need for, and the way to, create a meat processing plant, or procedure in the state. Given the increased availability of locally grown meat it is imperative that we have the ability to slaughter this meat nearby. Not only is this a health issue it is a homeland security issue – we need to be able to feed our state if something were to happen to transportation, or to the larger factory farms. Additionally, it should be Connecticut state policy to support our local farmers in everyway possible. The Connecticut Food Policy Council does that.

The Connecticut Food Policy Council addresses concerns such as: farmland preservation, urban agriculture, emergency food supply, transportation, markets for locally-grown food, food and nutrition education, food safety, obesity prevention, child nutrition, food assistance programs and inner-city supermarkets thus linking economic development, land use planning, environmental protection and preservation, farming, national security, health and urban issues. The Council creates discussion and coordination of food policy in the state.

Elimination of the Connecticut Food Policy Council is shortsighted at best, and is clearly NOT a money savings option. The Council has an annual budget of \$25,000. The lines of communications that are opened through participation in the Council are outstanding. So often state agencies don't communicate with one another, and can be duplicative in their efforts and can miss opportunities for policy that can either feed more children and the elderly, or bring additional funds into the state. Elimination the Connecticut Food Policy Council is nothing short of being penny wise and pound foolish.

The same can be said of the Connecticut Commission on Children. This is a statewide organization that has brought many great ideas to state government that other state agencies have missed. The ideas are such that save the state money or bring funds into the state – such as the Food Stamp Employment and Training program that encourages the state to access a federally funded program to give food stamp users employment training and supports. The Commission on Children realized the state was not using this program to its fullest potential and created legislation and political will to make it happen.

The Commission on Children is the partner agency with the Department of Public Health on the Childhood Obesity Council, and held an extremely well attended day long conference on childhood obesity. There were many different viewpoints, and many policy ideas that will decrease obesity in the state, thereby saving money in the future on health costs.

As the executive director of a statewide anti-hunger organization I am always impressed with the foresight those at the Commission have when it comes to policy concerning food. The Commission staff understands fully that children that do not thrive as babies will have lifelong problems, and the Commission on Children works to advocate for the WIC program, worked on the school nutrition bill, as children who don't eat well don't learn well, and children with weight issues are more likely to not only be sick as adults, but have social issues that decrease their learning experiences at school. The Commission also, as shown in the interest they generated on the Food Stamp Employment and Training program, looks to the whole family for success.

Again, this is a penny wise but pound foolish decision that will not save the state money, but could in fact be detrimental to our state budget. A slash and burn mentality to lower the state budget is not the proper way to deal with our state budget, and seems on some level to show a misunderstanding of how much these two organizations save not only money, but livelihoods, families and children as well.

Please do not eliminate the Connecticut Food Policy Council and the Commission on Children as outlined in the Governor's Bill 840.

Thank you for you time today.